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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION ON MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT

Editorial Commentary

-- "The other thing that is dead"

Chief Editor Ayman Safadi writes on the back-page of independent, centrist Arabic daily Al-Ghad (07/18): "Amr Mousa needed many years to conclude that Israel's denial of all the signed agreements, its nullification of the Palestinian partner, and its re-occupation of Palestinian territories, all mean that the peace process has long been dead and buried. There is another thing that lying dead before the very eyes of Amr Mousa. We wonder how long it is going to take him to acknowledge that the Arab League that he represents is also dead.... There are only two options before the Arab League. The first is launching an effective move led by the three countries that have international and regional influence in the Arab Israeli conflict, namely Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Jordan ... that translates into concrete action for ending Israel's aggression and re-arranges the situation in the region within the context of conditions that fulfill the minimum of Arab rights.... The second option is for Amr Mousa to declare the demise of the Arab League and its claim of the presence of an official Arab regime, just as clearly as he had declared the demise of the peace process. May be this acknowledgement will lead to a new birth, either from steps and programs undertaken by the Arabs or from the depth of the vacuum and desperation that have become the markings of the region."

-- "To whom do the people complain!"

Chief Editor Taher Odwan writes on the back-page of independent, mass-appeal Arabic daily Al-Arab Al-Yawm (07/18): "Insisting on the method of complaining to the United Nations and disavowing responsibilities required from the Arab regime is disastrous and irresponsible, because it is happening at a time when the Arab land is turning into an arena of destruction and devastation as well as massacres and bloodshed of people who have surrendered their lives and their homelands to governments whose duty it is to protect the land, the people and the sovereignty and not hand these people to slaughter and destruction. It is funny that the [Arab] regimes are just now finding out about Iran's influence in the region and that this discovery is used as a justification to abandon Lebanon. If there is a 'Shiite crescent' extending from Tehran to Beirut, then who had paved the way for its existence? Was it not the Arab summit meetings that allowed the American occupation to destroy Iraq and turn it into an arena for sectarian and civil war? Who allowed Iran to own Iraq? Was it not America, the 'friend' of the Arabs, and with support of decisions issued by Arab summits, that gave the green light for this dangerous strategic penetration? We are at the

threshold of decisive strategic changes in the region. If the peace process is dead, then where is the Arab stand that should be prepared and ready to deal with Israel's attempts at imposing surrender on the Arabs? It is not an issue of preferring Siniora over Hassan Nasrallah or Mahmoud Abbas over Haniyeh. The fact is that it is a battleground, where regional and international players have turned the tables upside down on the heads of all the Arabs....

Avoiding the war or regional wars ... is done by the Arabs taking control of their own issues and causes from the hands of the Americans and the Israelis and by adopting a stern position vis-à-vis the American, British and Iranian occupations in Iraq and a strong position vis-à-vis the continued Israeli occupation of Palestinian, Syrian and Lebanese lands."

-- "Jordan's options vis-à-vis the Israeli aggression against Lebanon"

Columnist Batir Wardam writes on the inside page of center-left, influential Arabic daily Al-Dustour (07/18): "The feelings of the Jordanian people vis-à-vis the Israeli aggression against Lebanon are defined by two contradicting waves. The first is that of anger, hatred and sadness at the loss of Lebanese civilian lives and the destruction of infrastructure in Lebanon. The second is joy and gloating at the fact that Israel is being subjected to Hizbollah's bombings.... It seems that the majority of the Jordanians are now rallying behind the feelings of joy and gloating at the bombing of Israel and they want to see more scene of this bombing.... Jordan finds itself in a difficult situation. Jordanians are calling for a stand against Israel ... and demand in the way of political pressure that Jordan make the 'symbolic' gesture of at freezing or canceling the peace treaty with Israel. The Jordanians street is always right, for Jordan must play a more effective role in the ongoing events, but it cannot do that alone. There must be an organized Arab alliance for that. The core of the new Arab alliance has started to appear. Unfortunately for the Jordanian street, it is not being formed by Jordan, Syria and Hizbollah, as people would have liked out of their sympathy for Lebanon and hatred for Israel, but rather by Jordan, Egypt and Saudi Arabia. This alliance is not calling for supporting the resistance and Hizbollah as the people had wanted, but rather is demanding Hizbollah to stop the uncalculated adventures and is calling for supporting the Lebanese government only, which, people forget, is the only legitimate party responsible for managing the affairs of the Lebanese state. The problem with the Jordanian-Saudi-Egyptian stand is not a moral one. The leaders of these countries are correct to understand the seriousness of the situation that is forming in the region and they are right to want to protect the political interests of their countries and refuse to be held hostage to the scheme of Hizbollah and Iran. The problem with this alliance is that it cannot protect the Lebanese people from the Israeli brutality, thus rendering it politically ineffective and giving Hizbollah more opportunity to gain popularity in the Arab world, a popularity that will increase in proportion with the increase of Israel's crimes in Lebanon.... The option of exercising political pressure on Israel must be available and present in the Jordanian decision-making process. There is also a need to involve the Jordanian people in such a decision, as the people have the right to know the political and economic repercussions of a unilateral decision to sever political relations with Israel and the sacrifices that the Jordanian people will have to make."

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